



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.  
Governor

Gregory N. Larkin, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.  
State Health Commissioner

May 4, 2011

Dear Indiana Summer Camp Directors:

This letter is to alert you to the possible risk of bats to your staff and campers. Bats are very common forms of wildlife and are often reported in and around summer camps. While most bats do not present a risk to humans, a certain percentage of them carry and transmit a deadly virus known as rabies. In the United States and Indiana, the most frequent source of rabies virus to humans are bats. In the past five years, two Indiana residents have died from rabies virus of bat origin. Unfortunately you cannot see which bats have rabies and which do not. For this reason, bat exposures in humans are reportable. Bat exposures must be reported to the local health department as soon as possible so that the exposed person can receive treatment in a timely manner and so that the animal can be quickly contained and tested for rabies. Without testing the animal, exposed persons may have to undergo expensive medical treatment, particularly rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. This treatment is life-saving but may be avoided if the bat is quickly captured and tests negative.

The majority of bat exposures occur when bats are found in human living environments, including summer cabins. Prior to opening cabins and other locations for sleeping, it is recommended to complete a bat inspection. If there is any evidence of bats roosting in those locations, they should not be used for sleeping or children's activities until the bats can be safely removed and the building bat-proofed. Any opening larger than ¼ inch (including those for electrical and plumbing) should be sealed to prevent re-entry of bats; these activities should occur from April-May or from August-October to avoid hibernation times and maternity colonies.

Bats should be submitted for testing when a bite has occurred, when there has been direct contact between a human and a bat, and when a bat is found in a room with someone who might be unaware of contact. Unaware situations would include someone who is sleeping, a child, a mentally disabled person, or someone who is intoxicated in some way. To avoid these types of exposures, efforts should be taken to prevent bats from inhabiting any type of human living environment.

For advice or help on bat issues, please contact your local wildlife biologist. Contact information for those individuals may be found at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/2716.htm>. You may also contact Dr. Jennifer House (below) for any bat or rabies questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer House, DVM, MPH, ACVPM  
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